Alberta Roundtable on Violence

In and Around Licensed Premises

Exploring the Issues

Sponsored by Alberta Gaming in partnership with Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security

November 22-23, 2005
March 31, 2006

Alberta

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Executive Summary

Why we need to act now

> **"Violent acts in and outside bars and lounges can erode an entire community's sense of safety and security."**
>
> –Harvey Cenaiko, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, November 22, 2005

> **"Even one violent incident is too many. Collectively, we can and we will address this issue."**
>
> –Gordon Graydon, Minister of Gaming, November 22, 2005

"Acts of violence are the product of historical, social, economic and political beliefs and values that are built into the structure of our society."* Violence has personal, social and economic consequences, and its impact is deep and far-reaching. Violence affects individuals, families and communities. It places health, safety and even lives at risk. It imposes huge costs on the health care and justice systems, on employers, on community services and on taxpayers.

Violence affects everyone, and some might argue that it is a growing problem in society. But while all citizens, to some extent, are vulnerable, numerous studies have found that bars and clubs are particularly high-risk locations for violence and violent injury.

The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises was convened to address this issue. The roundtable was staged in two parts. Participants met in Edmonton from November 22–23, 2005, and reconvened in Calgary on March 31, 2006.

The discussions at the roundtable were exploratory in nature. Participants offered ideas and suggestions based on their own experiences and perceptions. They offered recommendations with the proviso that further research and consultation are needed to identify and validate best practices.

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* **Government of Alberta**, *Achieving a violence-free Alberta is everybody's business: Regional workshop guide and workbook, p. 14*

Part One

During the first part of the roundtable, in November 2005, bar owners and managers, municipal and community officials, liquor industry regulators and law enforcement officers explored the question of violence in and around licensed establishments. The participants shared their particular experiences and perspectives as they worked to define the issue and develop a better appreciation of its complexity. They shared strategies they had tried in their own establishments and their own communities, and compared notes on what worked best and what approaches were most effective. They heard firsthand about the experience of other stakeholders whose perspective on violence may have been different from their own. Police officers and regulators learned about the challenges faced by bar owners, while owners and operators got a better appreciation of law enforcement and policy-related issues and concerns.

Roundtable participants worked together to broaden and deepen their understanding of the issue of violence in and around licensed premises. Their discussions helped define the problem in terms of the types of violence that occur and who is involved. Participants recognized that violence can happen anywhere and cross demographic, socio-economic and gender boundaries. They noted that alcohol overconsumption is often a factor, and that young men between the ages of 18 and 24 are among the groups of individuals at particular risk.

Participants recognized that the root causes of violence are complex and interlinked. Violence can stem from cultural and socio-economic factors such as societal breakdown, interracial tension or criminal gang activity. It can stem from environmental factors related to the physical and social characteristics of a nightclub or bar. Bar management and serving practices can also play a role, as can group dynamics and factors related to the behaviour, personality and attitudes of individual patrons.

Participants drew on their own knowledge to suggest best practices, offer practical advice and explore ways to do their part in addressing the issue of violence. They developed an inventory of prevention, operations and enforcement strategies that are currently in place to address the issue of violence. They also brainstormed new ideas.

In response to the external, socio-cultural factors that contribute to violence, participants proposed community mobilization strategies, new legislation and bylaws, transportation-related strategies, enforcement-related interventions and public awareness and education. With regard to the operations of licensed establishments, they proposed legislated and voluntary measures to control the physical and social environment, establish sound operating policies and procedures, and improve staff recruitment and training.

After two days of discussion and debate, participants proposed meeting again once they had had the opportunity to hold local meetings and get feedback on the ideas and strategies put forward during Part One.

Part Two

On March 31, 2006, the roundtable reconvened to continue discussions and set priorities for addressing the issue of violence in and around licensed premises. Five themes emerged:

1. Violence in and around licensed premises is not an isolated phenomenon. Rather, it reflects what some perceive as a growing tolerance for violence in an increasingly violent society. What happens in bars and nightclubs mirrors society at large. It reflects economic and socio-cultural factors such as neighbourhood demographics, the employment rate, today's parenting practices, the breakdown of traditional family structures and the proliferation of violence in everyday cultural products such as movies, games, sports and television.

2. Eliminating violence requires an integrated partnership approach that involves the whole community. Liquor licensees, regulators, legislators, police departments, the justice system, health authorities, educators, neighbourhoods, communities, city halls, the provincial and federal governments and individual citizens need to work together to address the issue. Throwing money at the problem is not enough.

3. Sound policy development and good decision-making depend on good research. Participants recommended conducting an environmental scan to collect baseline data on violence in and around licensed premises. They also recommended a review of the legislative framework, and cross-jurisdictional research to validate proposed best practices and identify other effective approaches.

4. Many licensees already employ a best practices approach in managing their operations. Communication and education are needed to spread current best practices across the industry. Additional research is needed to establish the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed new approaches such as staggered closing times, minimum drink prices, bans on glassware, mandatory liability insurance and more rigorous licensing requirements. Roundtable participants emphasized that a "one size fits all" approach is not appropriate: different communities and different types of drinking establishments have different needs. Further discussion is needed to explore the degree of regulation that is appropriate and the effectiveness of voluntary versus legislated standards.

5. Public awareness and education about preventing alcohol-related violence is needed at all levels of society, from schoolchildren and post-secondary students to the business community, law enforcers, liquor licensees and their staff, and the "ordinary citizens" who patronize licensed establishments. Start-up training for new bar owners and specialized training for door and security staff were identified as key areas.

Summing Up

Participants were unanimous in their acknowledgement of the value of the roundtable and welcomed the opportunity to hear the diversity of issues and views expressed by their associates and colleagues. They affirmed that comprehensive training, sound operating policies and procedures, effective legislation and consistent enforcement can all play a role in preventing violence and addressing its causes. They recognized that all stakeholders have a role to play. They also recognized that much work remains.

The contents of this report reflect the diversity of ideas and opinions expressed by roundtable participants. Although there was much common ground, the reported results cannot be interpreted as having the support of participants as a whole, or even the support of the majority. Nonetheless, the ideas and recommendations generated at the roundtable are a significant first step toward addressing the issue of violence.

The roundtable results provide a starting point for future work and future government, community and industry collaborations to respond to the complex issues related to drinking and violence. As an immediate next step, government staff will study the roundtable results and prepare a report with recommendations for review by the Minister of Gaming and the Alberta Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. The ministers' review of the report and recommendations prepared by staff will determine what action is taken. Next steps may include allocating funds for further research, drafting new legislation or recommending the formation of a task force to build consensus and propose standards. In the meantime, further discussions at the community level and continued cooperation among stakeholders will bring all Albertans closer to solving the problem of violence in and around licensed premises.

About the Roundtable

The Goal

The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises explored the issue of violence within the context of bars, nightclubs and other licensed premises. Its purpose was to gather input, information and advice from stakeholders "on the front lines" – namely, from the people who work in, own, manage, regulate and protect the province's licensed establishments.

Alberta's Gaming and Liquor Regulation defines five classes of licensed premises. Roundtable discussions focused on establishments with Class A (minors prohibited) licences, which are issued to hotels and other premises where minors are prohibited and where adults can buy and consume liquor. Licences for nightclubs, bars and lounges are included in this class.

In 2004–2005, 5,201 of 8,208 liquor licences in Alberta were for Class A establishments. Of these, 1,904 were for Class A (minors prohibited) premises.

The Participants

Roundtable participants* included owners and operators of licensed establishments, representatives from municipal governments and from the hospitality industry, law enforcement officials, legislators, regulators, researchers, policy–makers, liquor inspectors, addictions counsellors, and staff from Alberta Gaming, Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security, and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

The participants represented communities across the province and hailed from Calgary, Camrose, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lacombe, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, St. Albert and Wetaskiwin. Some came from other jurisdictions. Working together, participants came to a better understanding of the problem, the underlying issues and the role they could play in preventing violence in and around licensed premises.

* *A list of participating organizations is included on p. 66.*

The Sponsors

The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises was sponsored by Alberta Gaming in partnership with Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security.

The **Ministry of Gaming** includes the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC), which licenses and regulates the province's liquor industry. The AGLC works with other ministries, other jurisdictions, industry partners and agencies like AADAC (the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission) to ensure the responsible sale, service and consumption of alcohol.

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission completed 25,198 inspections of licensed premises in 2004–2005.

The **Solicitor General and Public Security** ministry keeps Alberta's communities safe through effective policing and crime prevention programs. It is responsible for the province's correctional programs and facilities, and coordinates programs for the victims of crime.

The Program

On November 22 and 23, 2005, roundtable delegates gathered in Edmonton to explore the issue of violence in and around licensed premises. On March 31, 2006, the roundtable reconvened in Calgary to continue discussions and identify priorities.

Over the course of three days, roundtable participants grappled with the problem of violence in and around licensed premises. They shared their particular experiences and perspectives as they worked to define the issue and develop a better appreciation of its complexity. They drew on their own knowledge to suggest best practices and offer practical advice for addressing the issue of violence in and around licensed premises.

Part One (Edmonton, November 22–23, 2005)

Part One of the roundtable opened with **introductory remarks** by the Honourable Gordon Graydon, Minister of Gaming, and the Honourable Harvey Cenaiko, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

Dr. Graham is a leading researcher in the area of alcohol-related aggression. She is the principal investigator for the Canadian segment of the Gender, Alcohol and Culture International Study (GENACIS).

Dr. Graham developed Ontario's Safer Bars training program, which has proven effective for reducing the incidence and severity of violence in nightclubs and bars.

A **keynote address** by Kathryn Graham, senior scientist with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in London, Ontario, established a context for the issue of violence. Dr. Graham outlined the social and environmental factors that can contribute to aggression, and proposed a number of strategies for intervention.

Participants split up into eight **breakout groups** chaired by facilitators from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and from Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security. Recorders for each group documented the discussion highlights, which were shared at report-back sessions following each group-discussion segment.

At the close of Part One, participants proposed holding a second roundtable to continue discussions, set priorities, consolidate stakeholder partnerships and begin to develop a coordinated provincial framework for addressing violence in and around licensed premises. Findings from Part One were compiled into a draft report that served as a resource for participants attending Part Two.*

Part Two (Calgary, March 31, 2006)

Part Two opened with a **welcome** from Norm Peterson, Deputy Minister of Alberta Gaming and Chief Executive Officer of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. Gerry McLennan, Executive Director of the AGLC's Regulatory Division, led the group through a **review of the draft report.**

* *This final report incorporates the previous draft report with the output from Part Two of the roundtable.*

Participants then split up into six **breakout groups** to discuss the key areas of the report and identify priorities. Two groups were assigned to each discussion area. The conclusions reached by each group were reported to the general assembly.

Gaming Minister Gordon Graydon and Harvey Cenaiko, Alberta Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, reaffirmed the Alberta government's commitment to deal with violence and ensure that Albertans feel safe in their communities. They called on participants to continue to work together to find solutions to this serious issue.

Part Two of the roundtable closed with a review of the priority areas discussed by the breakout groups.

The Report

> **The contents of this report reflect the ideas and opinions expressed by roundtable participants, and reflect the diversity of participants' individual perceptions and experiences. Although there was much common ground, the reported results cannot be interpreted as having the support of the roundtable as a whole, or even the support of the majority participants.**

The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and identify areas of concern. Participants shared strategies they had tried in their own establishments and their own communities, and compared notes on what worked best and what approaches were most effective.

Roundtable participants recognized the need for further research and acknowledged that validating their experience against a body of empirical evidence is a necessary next step. Such validation is outside the scope of this report. Nonetheless, the report includes a number of facts and figures drawn from the keynote presentation in Part 1 and from other sources. Readers should note that this material does not reflect a comprehensive review of the research literature: it is included to provide food for thought and stimulate further research and debate.

The report itself provides a record of the roundtable and summarizes the ideas and recommendations developed by participants. This information provides a starting point for future work.

Defining the Problem

Unless otherwise noted, the information reported in this chapter reflects roundtable participants' experiences and perceptions.

In Part One of the roundtable, participants began their deliberations by building an understanding about the issue of violence. Their first assignment was to define the problem in terms of:

- the types of violence that occur in and around licensed premises
- where violence occurs
- who is involved
- the root causes of violence
- the impact of violence on individuals and on the establishment

Types of Violence

"The community perception is that violence in bars and nightclubs is on the rise. There's a lot of finger pointing. But there always was violence. What's different now is the degree of violence and the sensationalism around the issue."

–A roundtable participant

Roundtable participants reported that violence in and around licensed premises takes many forms. Intimidation through threats, verbal abuse and eye contact can lead to pushing, kicking, fist fights and knock-downs. Assaults with weapons can involve glass bottles, belts, guns, knives, switchblades, pepper spray, pool cues, furniture, baseball bats, batons and brass knuckles. Sexual aggression can range from groping to sexual assault.

Many participants noted that theft, property damage and vandalism often accompany violent crime. Some expressed concern that the level of violence appears to be escalating. They felt that the number of incidents involving weapons and resulting in serious injury or death was on the rise. As one breakout group reported, "Fights now are fights to the death. There's no stopping."

What is violence?

Statistics Canada defines violent crime as "homicide, attempted murder, sexual assault, assault, robbery, discharging a firearm with intent, assault against a peace-public officer, kidnapping and abduction" (Pottie Bunge et al., 2005, Note 4, p. 69).

Where and When Does Violence Occur?

Although there was widespread acknowledgement that violence can occur anywhere–and in any type of licensed establishment–participants' discussions focused on bars and clubs.

> "Violence can happen at a hockey game, a restaurant or anywhere–not just in a licensed establishment. We need research on where violence happens, who is involved and whether the perpetrators are known to each other."
>
> –A roundtable participant

Participants recognized that violence can occur inside or outside a licensed establishment. It can involve the neighbourhood and the community as well as the establishment itself.

Participants noted that violence frequently starts inside a bar and spills out into the street at closing time or when disorderly patrons are asked to leave. Alternatively, altercations that originate outside the premises can escalate into violence inside the bar environment.

Participants identified the following times and places as high risks for violence:

- weekends (Thursday to Saturday), when more patrons frequent bars and clubs

  > *One participant group noted that the potential for violence exists wherever crowds of people congregate–on college campuses, in parking lots, at concerts or organized special events, or when groups of friends embark on pub crawls.*

- closing time

  - *The potential for violence can increase as a result of increased alcohol consumption at last call. Congested streets can also be a factor, especially when the bars close and crowds of patrons empty out. Mob mentality can take over, particularly if people are hanging around waiting for cabs or lining up for food at street vendors' stalls.*

- lineups

  - *Violence can erupt when people have long waits in line before they are admitted to a licensed establishment. Conflict or aggression in a lineup can escalate to violence inside the bar.*

Some participants suggested that violence is more likely to occur in poorly managed establishments or in establishments where the physical environment is crowded or unpleasant. Some noted that violence is also more likely in popular places that attract young males, but not young females.

Many breakout groups believed that violence is more likely in communities with a high density of bars. Some proposed that large establishments are more prone to violent incidents than smaller ones; others felt that the size of the venue is not a factor. One group noted that large establishments may have more incentive to prevent violence and more resources to direct toward risk mitigation.

A look at the research

"Numerous studies have found that bars and clubs are high-risk locations for violence and violent injury." In a province-wide general population survey conducted in Ontario in 1999, nearly two thirds of males and one quarter of females in the 25-34 age group reported that their most recent experience with physical aggression happened on licensed premises.

–Dr. Kathryn Graham, roundtable keynote presentation

Who Is Involved?

Participants observed that violence is often spontaneous, but it can also erupt when people bring grudges or previous conflict to a licensed establishment. They noted that violent incidents can involve two people, groups of individuals or organized gangs. Altercations between individuals can easily escalate to involve others, so that what starts as a one-on-one dispute can quickly involve multiple combatants.

Participants noted that violence can involve "ordinary folk" and cross demographic, socio-economic and gender boundaries. They believed violence is particularly prevalent among the following categories of patrons:

- patrons impaired by alcohol or under the influence of other drugs
    - *As one group put it, "addiction leads to crazy behaviour."*
- members of organized gangs, especially when inter-gang rivalry is a factor
    - *One group observed that gang presence can sometimes incite violence among people who want to be associated with gangs. Other groups linked gang presence to drug dealing.*
- young males, especially the 18–24 age demographic
    - *Some groups noted that violent behaviour among young men is often motivated by peer pressure and the need to maintain a macho persona.*
    - *"A fighter is a fighter." Some male perpetrators are simply bullies looking for a fight, and many are repeat offenders.*
- ethnic groups or visible minorities
    - *Aggression can be motivated by interracial tension, especially when different groups hold different cultural values.*
- out-of-towners, including tourists and transient workers who are just passing through
    - *People who have no ties to the local community don't see the consequences of violent or irresponsible behaviour that is "not in their own backyard."*
- couples whose relationship issues or domestic disputes erupt in a bar environment

Two breakout groups felt that women are becoming more aggressive and violent.

Roundtable participants noted that most incidents of violence occur between patrons of the establishment. However, they also reported instances where overzealous security staff had escalated potentially violent situations or even inflicted violence on patrons. They also reported incidents where the lack of staff intervention resulted in violence–either on the premises or outside, after closing time.

A look at the research

Keynote presenter Dr. Kathryn Graham described the escalation of an aggressive event between two individuals whose action or response may be prompted by overreaction, emotion, a grudge, face-saving or even the desire to start a fight. Other people get involved–on both sides of the dispute–to show loyalty to a friend or because they're looking for a fight. In some cases, bystanders who intervene in such altercations become victims of violence themselves.

What Are the Causes of Violence?

The causes of violence identified by roundtable participants can be grouped within four broad categories:

- excessive drinking
- the external environment
- the licensed establishment
- the individual patron

Because of the nature of the issue, many of these categories overlap. For example, participants identified overconsumption of alcohol as one cause of violence. The causes of overconsumption can be cultural (drinking is a socially accepted activity), establishment related (bars may discount drinks and overserve) or related to individual patrons (someone may drink too much to impress friends).

A look at the research

Many of the causes of violence identified by roundtable participants have been validated by researchers.

Researchers agree that the causes of violence and other crime problems are complex and interlinked. They include cultural and socio-economic factors, environmental factors (including the social and physical features of licensed premises), group dynamics, and factors related to the behaviour, personality and attitudes of individual patrons (Doherty & Roche, 2003; Benson et al., 2001; Scott, 2001; Graham, 2005). Specific risk factors include:

- the social and cultural milieu (A society's tolerance for intoxication is often reflected in its laws.)

- the physical and social environment in which drinking occurs
- poor management and server practices
- the individual patron's personality, including predispositions and learned attitudes

Excessive Drinking

Roundtable participants discussed the relationship between excessive drinking and violent behaviour. They noted that alcohol overconsumption can result from binge drinking (significant in venues near colleges and universities), bar-hopping or downing significant amounts of alcohol at last call. Premises-related factors such as discount drink specials (happy hours) and overservice also play a role.

> Binge drinking is commonly defined as "the consumption of five drinks in one sitting for men and four drinks in one sitting for women at least once in a two-week period" (AADAC, 2005c, p. 8, citing the Harvard School of Public Health and other sources).

Keynote speaker Dr. Kathryn Graham noted that alcohol affects risk-taking behaviour, thinking, attention and emotions. Dr. Graham's study of large (300+ patron capacity) Toronto bars showed that violence occurs because people are intoxicated *and* because people who are likely to become intoxicated go to bars where fights happen: that is, both the physiological effects of alcohol and the patron's personality and behaviour come into play. Dr. Graham's research also showed that "a substantial proportion" of violent incidents are "not related to intoxication but rather to 'macho' attitudes, sexual overtures, jealousy and bar activities such as pool playing" (Graham, 2005).

A look at the research

Most researchers reject a direct causal relationship between alcohol consumption and violence. If there is a relationship, it is believed to arise from "complex interactions between psychopharmacological, contextual, and societal forces" (Benson et al., 2001, p. 1). It involves "the circumstances in which alcohol is consumed" and "the characteristics of individuals who consume the various types of alcohol" (p. 11). This "alcohol–person–situation" interaction suggests that "alcohol consumption increases the probability of violent behavior only for some persons in some situations" (Benson, p. 3, citing Lipsey et al., 1997, p. 247).

The External Environment

Socio-cultural context

> "There's been a cultural shift. At one time, when the police issued warnings…people would listen. Now, violence is so much a part of society that warnings are not heeded."
>
> –A roundtable participant

Participants recognized that the issue of violence in and around licensed premises must be addressed within the broader context of violence in society. They felt that violence has become commonplace, permeating everyday cultural products such as music, games, television and motion pictures. One result is a growing acceptance and tolerance for violence. Another is the proliferation of weapons in society–as status symbols, for protection and "because everyone else carries a weapon." This has an impact on licensed premises: rather than avoiding potential violence, many patrons come to the bar with a concealed weapon and an aggressive mindset.

> "We live in a different society. The level of respect for all issues is declining, and that opens up other issues. With the lack of respect, people today act differently. They don't think they'll be held accountable for actions, and often they aren't. That makes people reluctant to report violence. They don't believe anything will be done, and they fear for their safety."
>
> –A roundtable participant

Roundtable participants felt that "overall societal breakdown" and "desensitization to violence" contribute to a lack of respect for government, police and local institutions. They noted that, in today's "me generation," there is a lack of personal responsibility and no accountability for actions. Some believed that the relaxation of policy and legislation, minimal sentencing and few deterrents within the judicial system have led to a lack of consequences.

Some participant groups identified affluence as an underlying cause of alcohol overconsumption and violence: young people in particular have more disposable income than ever before. Some groups identified the lack of parental supervision and involvement. One group suggested that the legal drinking age is a factor, and another noted that many drinkers are too young to understand the effects of alcohol.

Many roundtable participants felt that drug use, organized crime and gang activity contribute to the escalation of violence in society. Because drugs are more readily available, people often get together to drink or smoke a joint before going to the bar.

One participant group pinpointed crystal meth as a particular cause of increased violence: "Intoxication affects motor skills. It's easier to deal with a drunk–who eventually passes out–than with someone high on cocaine or crystal meth or heroin who doesn't realize his own super strength...and has a total lack of respect [for authority]."

> "The increase of visible gang presence in a community leads to an increase in violence everywhere, and it shows up in licensed premises."
>
> —A roundtable participant

> "Criminal gangs have a lucrative drug market and enforce their turf. They'll walk in and have complete control and dominance in a bar. It changes the whole atmosphere."
>
> —A roundtable participant

Some participants noted that interracial tension–particularly in cities–can lead to violence. Different cultural perspectives and different cultural reactions to violence and authority can also be a source of violence and tension. For example, in some cultures women are not respected, and police and regulators are the seen as "the bad guys."

Although participants recognized that broad societal influences are beyond the control of liquor licensees, they noted that neighbourhood and community characteristics can contribute to violence in and around licensed premises. For example, some participants felt that violent incidents may be more frequent in skid row bars or locations where a culture of violence prevails. Some proposed that violence may be more common in communities with a high concentration of bars clustered in the same area. They reported that problems related to high bar concentrations are exacerbated by:

Alberta's Liquor Licensee Handbook stipulates that Class A licence holders may sell liquor from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. Consumption of liquor is permitted for a maximum of one hour after the time when liquor sales cease. All liquor must be removed from patron areas by 3:00 a.m.

- restrictive legislation
  - *Liquor legislation dictates the hours during which liquor can be sold and served. The effect of this legislation is that most bars close at the same time, with the result that "rivers of people pour out onto the street" at closing time.*
  - *Anti-smoking bylaws result in crowds of people congregating outside bars, which can create the potential for violence.*
- a shortage of parking, which can lead to noise and disruption in the residential communities near bars
- inadequate transportation (too few cabs available) at closing time: "The mood changes very quickly if patrons have to wait too long, and fights ensue."
- lack of funding for adequate police staffing

A look at the research

"The evidence on the effect of bar concentration is mixed.... [T]he mere fact that a neighborhood has a high concentration of bars does not necessarily mean there will be higher levels of crime in the area" (Scott, 2001, p. 4).

"Certain types of bars, such as dance clubs, have higher levels of reported violence. Neighborhood bars...have lower levels of reported violence, partly because patrons know one another well....Bars that serve as pickup places, cater to prostitutes, traffic in drugs or stolen goods, feature aggressive entertainment, etc., are at a higher risk for violence" (Scott, 2001, p. 3).

The Licensed Establishment

Roundtable participants identified a number of bar operation–related factors that might contribute to an increased incidence of violence. The significance of many of these factors has been validated by research.

Licensed establishment–related factors identified by participants include:

- the size of the venue

    - *Some breakout groups felt there was no relationship between violence and the size of a licensed establishment. Others felt that larger venues are more prone to violence than smaller ones.*

- the physical environment, including layout and overcrowding

    - *Poorly designed traffic flow patterns and overcrowding can lead to lineups,bottlenecks, slower service and physical "bumping" that can rile tempers and result in aggressive behaviour.*

    - *Smoky bars, poor ventilation and pounding music can make patrons aggressive.*

    - *Dark corners and unsupervised washrooms can become havens for drug deals.*

    - *For smokers, the prohibition of smoking in bars can cause tension. Participants identified the need for research about the relationship between smoking bans and violence in and around licensed premises.*

- the social environment

    - *The sexual climate and "gender dynamics" in a licensed establishment can contribute to aggressive behaviour. For example, inappropriate sexual touching can illicit aggressive reactions, and sexual competition can lead to violence.*

    - *One participant group suggested that bars with a high proportion of anonymous, transient patrons might have more problems with violence than bars with an established clientele.*

    - *One group reported that popular bars with a predominantly young male clientele are likely to be more violent.*

    - *When food service is not promoted, liquor becomes the main menu item. This contributes to overconsumption and aggressive behaviour.*

- operations management

  - *Poor hiring practices and the absence of security checks during the recruitment process can create problems: without proper checks, unwary operators may hire staff with criminal connections.*

  - *High staff turnover, inadequate staff–patron ratios and the lack of house policies can make it more difficult for operators to deal with acts of aggression before they escalate into violence.*

  - *Untrained staff lack the skills and knowledge they need to work as a team, manage lineups and defuse violence.*

  - *Discount drink specials and overservice can result in excessive drinking and contribute to violence.*

A look at the research

Roundtable keynote presenter Kathryn Graham and other researchers (Scott, 2001) note that both the physical and the social characteristics of a licensed establishment can increase the potential for violence.

Crowding, smoky air, poor ventilation, a lack of cleanliness, poor-quality (as defined by patrons) music or entertainment, high noise levels, uncomfortable or insufficient seating, too-warm temperatures and inadequate or too-bright lighting create an unpleasant bar atmosphere and increase the risk of aggression and violence.

The social environment of a bar also has an influence on violence. Contributing factors include

- behavioural expectations: if establishments tolerate profanity, intoxication, drug dealing, rowdiness or sexually permissive behaviour, patrons get the impression that violence or aggression will be tolerated as well

- competitive situations: competition at the pool table or other games can lead to anger and frustration, while drink-chugging contests can contribute to overconsumption

- aggressive bouncers: "The more aggressively security staff handles patrons, the more aggressively patrons respond" (Scott, 2001, p. 4).

- a predominately young male clientele: "Many incidents of bar aggression start when young men challenge one another…Overall, women's presence has a calming effect on men's behaviour in crowded bars" (Scott, 2001, p. 4, citing Macintyre & Hommel, 1997).

The Individual Patron

Participants identified a number of factors that contribute to violence and aggression, particularly among young males:

- intoxication
- a party mentality
- the need to impress somebody or be somebody
- the need to save face
- territorial behaviour
- the lack of a sense of community
- sexual competition
- unclear rules for social behaviour (As one participant asked, "When is it appropriate to pick up a date?")
- a predisposition for aggression ("Some guys go looking for a fight.")
- personal problems, which may include gambling, substance abuse, depression, having a grudge against someone at the bar or simply "having a bad day"

What Is the Impact of Violence?

Roundtable participants recognized that violence in and around licensed premises affects the very fabric of society and makes people feel unsafe in their own communities. It consumes scarce resources and puts a strain on public institutions such as the health care and justice systems.

Participants noted that violence has an impact on

- individual citizens
- liquor licensees
- neighbourhoods, communities and local businesses

Violence can lead to the breakdown of family structures. It can cause fear and anxiety among ordinary citizens concerned for their personal safety. Both perpetrators and innocent bystanders can suffer personal injury or even death as a result of violence, and individuals involved in violent incidents can face financial losses, loss of employment, lawsuits and criminal charges.

For liquor licensees, violence can result in property damage and vandalism. It can increase the risk of lawsuits and raise costs for business and liability insurance, including Workers Compensation Board coverage. Violence makes it harder to attract and retain good staff. And if an establishment becomes known as a place where violence is likely to occur, a loss of business can follow.

Violence in and around licensed premises can result in public mischief, noise, litter, crime, property damage and vandalism in surrounding communities. It can damage the image of the community and reduce tourism. It can create strains on local businesses such as convenience stores and taxi companies that serve patrons after the bars close.

Roundtable participants noted that the cost of preventing and dealing with violence can result in higher taxes. Violence increases costs for the health care system, the judicial system, addictions treatment programs and social agencies that must deal with the consequences of violence. It also increases policing costs. Some participants felt that a disproportionate percentage of policing resources was focused on a small percentage of establishments.

A look at the research

In a national survey conducted in 2003 (Ekos Research, 2004), one in four Canadians reported feeling vulnerable to property crime and one in seven felt "quite open to violent crime." Four per cent of Canadians experience violent crime annually.

"The annual cost of crime to Canadians is estimated to range between $35 billion and $46 billion" (National Crime Prevention Centre, citing a 1996 study).

Taking Stock

Identifying strategies for preventing and dealing with violence

The information reported in this chapter is the result of brainstorming sessions intended to generate ideas for further discussion. Because different topics were discussed by different participant groups, the proposed recommendations may not have the endorsement of the roundtable as a whole.

Participants offered their recommendations with the proviso that further research and discussion are needed to identify and validate best practices.

In Part One of the roundtable, participants worked in small groups to **develop an inventory of anti violence strategies** and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Their discussions focused on three predefined categories: prevention, operations and enforcement. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and strategies within one category often work in concert with strategies in other categories. For example, operating policies and procedures can have a direct impact on preventing violence and enforcing liquor-related legislation; enforcement in and of itself can serve as a prevention tool. The category labels simply served as a means of organizing and focusing the discussion.

Participants' next task was to **identify new or improved strategies** for dealing with violence in and around licensed premises. Their discussions focused on the following predefined categories:

- research, monitoring and evaluation
- operations (of licensed premises)
- industry training
- municipal bylaws, provincial legislation and policy
- prevention
- enforcement

In some cases, the ideas that were proposed were not new strategies, but rather, endorsements of current approaches.

Participants' discussions affirmed that comprehensive training, sound operating policies and procedures, effective legislation and consistent enforcement can all play a role in preventing violence and addressing its causes. In the previous chapter, the causes of violence identified by roundtable participants were categorized as follows:

- excessive drinking
- factors specific to the external environment (the socio-cultural context)
- factors specific to the licensed establishment itself
- factors specific to the individual patron

In the current chapter, participants' ideas for addressing these causes are grouped into the following corresponding categories:

- reducing consumption
- managing the external environment through community mobilization, legislation and bylaws, transportation-related strategies, enforcement, public awareness and education
- managing the licensed establishment through legislated and voluntary measures to control the physical and social environment, establish sound operating policies and procedures, and improve staff recruitment and training

Violence-prevention measures specific to individual patrons were not discussed: except insofar as individual behaviour can be influenced by public education and environment. These factors are beyond the sphere of influence of roundtable participants.

What the research shows

Keynote presenter Dr. Kathryn Graham identified five types of intervention to reduce violence and injury related to drinking in licensed premises:

- education and training
- policies and laws
- enforcement and policing
- voluntary codes of practice
- community mobilization

Reducing Consumption

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Roundtable participants identified several voluntary and legislated **bar operations–related strategies** to reduce excessive drinking:

- responsible beverage service, which includes monitoring consumption and refusing service to intoxicated patrons
- restricting service hours
- restricting happy hours

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Participants proposed implementing in-house breath sampling to provide patrons with an easy way to assess their own sobriety. They also proposed the following new strategies that would require **legislative changes** or **community intervention** before they could be implemented:

- establishing minimum drink prices
- raising the minimum age for drinking
- preventing alcohol abuse by providing public education about the hazards of overconsumption

Managing the External Environment

Community Mobilization

"Community mobilization combined with training programs, enhanced enforcement and policy development may be the preferred option [for reducing bar-related violence] when problems are concentrated in a particular area. This approach can be powerful, but it requires considerable leadership and resources and must be made part of normal operating processes in the community if the effect is to be sustained" (Graham, 2005).

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* *Consumption-reduction strategies related to the operation of licensed premises are discussed in more detail in the report section called "Operating Policy and Procedures," which begins on p. 42.*

Addressing the issue of violence requires action and commitment by a broad range of stakeholders. Participants reported that cooperation between liquor licensees, community associations, local governments, the education and health sectors, regulatory agencies and the police is key. They identified several multi-stakeholder programs that have been successful in preventing violence in a number of Alberta communities. A list of current programs is provided on p. 28.

Roundtable participants noted that proactive, community-based partnerships can be effective in responding to specific local needs. Such partnerships establish good relationships and get people working together. They help to build "a culture of compliance" and make it possible to share ideas, resources and expertise.

Nonetheless, "keeping things going" is a significant challenge. Roundtable participants noted that it takes time, effort and dollars to build acceptance and buy–in–both from business owners and from the community at large. Because participation is voluntary, there are no universally adopted standards, and best practices are not consistently applied. High staff turnover in the hospitality industry makes it difficult to build and maintain effective partnerships: new staff must be trained, and relationships continually re-established. Because the program focus is local, not province-wide, there is little inter-jurisdictional exchange of ideas or information. Local groups are faced with a multitude of issues in addition to violence, and must distribute often-scarce resources accordingly. In addition, jurisdictional boundaries (in terms of who is responsible) are sometimes unclear.

Participants noted that community mobilization efforts are particularly effective when liquor licensees, communities, regulatory and government agencies, and the police take ownership of the problem and work together to share information and resources. In Edmonton's Old Strathcona district, for example, the 8 to 12 police officers assigned to the area have established good relationships with business owners and liquor licensees. They have taken ownership of the problem and their commitment to solving it is high because the district is "their turf."

Participants recommended the expansion of programs such as Grande Prairie's Safe City Nights (see p.28), which takes a multi-faceted, multi-stakeholder approach that involves enhanced policing, liaison with the school system, staff training and increased enforcement. Participants also noted the need for continued (and better) cooperation between licensees, the police and enforcement agencies. They recommended the following strategies for sharing information and improving communication:

- Provide incentives and appropriate mechanisms for licensees to share information about violence prevention programs they've introduced in their establishments. Share this information provincially as well as locally.

- Keep logs to document violent incidents, and share this information with the AGLC and the police.

  - *Participants proposed the development of a template* to facilitate reporting. They noted the need for strategic analysis of collected information to determine the impact of violence on licensees, enforcement agencies and regulators. They proposed investigating the possibility of province-wide intelligence exchange between licensees, police agencies and the AGLC.*

- Document, monitor and share strategies and best practices that have proven effective in preventing or dealing with violence.

  - *One participant group suggested that best practices should be posted on a liquor industry intranet, where experienced owners could share information with new licensees.*

- Develop strategies for documenting and sharing best practices across the industry. (For example, how do you hire the best door staff? What factors do you look at? As one participant queried, "Do you hire the widest guy available to fill the door? Or a tiny female with good communications skills?")

  - *One participant group suggested that industry associations might be well placed to coordinate intra-industry communication.*

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* *The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission's incident report form is an appropriate template. The AGLC provides instructions and training to assist licensees and police forces in completing the form correctly.*

Current Community Mobilization Strategies

CALGARY

Calgary's **Public Safety Task Force** brings a number of enforcement agencies together. Representatives from the Calgary Police Service, city licensing and fire authorities, and the AGLC conduct joint "operations checks" of licensed premises that have a history of violations or the potential for violations. Team-based operations checks are also conducted when complaints have been received about particular licensed premises.

Calgary's task force has launched a **daytime enforcement unit** to provide the information and education needed to support successful public safety programs.

EDMONTON

The **Barwatch** program is a partnership between local business owners, the Edmonton Police Service and the Edmonton Emergency Response Team. ("Bar watch" or "pub watch" programs are in place in Vancouver, Seattle and Portland.) Program features include:

- using video surveillance to monitor problem patrons
- using ID scanning and developing banned persons lists to reduce gang and drug activity in licensed premises
- information sharing and communication between stakeholders

Members of the **Old Strathcona Hospitality Association** work together to share information, raise awareness and develop best practices with regard to training and operating standards for licensed establishments. The efforts of the association have led to increased police presence in problem areas and better coordination with the AGLC.

The **West Edmonton Mall Barwatch Program** sees mall security staff, club owners and city police working together to reduce violence by "preventing the first punch from being thrown."

The **Whyte Avenue Task Force** facilitates a coordinated, community-based response that involves city police, planning and bylaw enforcement officers, the AGLC and business owners.

GRANDE PRAIRIE

In Grande Prairie, the city's Enforcement Services branch (responsible for the enforcement of provincial legislation and municipal bylaws) joined forces with the AGLC, the RCMP and owners and managers of licensed establishments to launch the **Safe City Nights program** in 2003. Program partners work together to reduce fights and disturbances in the city's bars and clubs. The features of Safe City Nights include

- enhanced policing on Friday and Saturday nights
- liaison with local high schools to educate young people about responsible drinking and the penalties associated with using fake ID and with drinking and driving
- training for door staff

The City of Grande Prairie has introduced a **"No Gang Colours, No Gang Clothing"** program to support business owners in banning criminal gang colours from their establishments. Participating business owners can request that patrons wearing gang insignia remove their "colours" or leave the premises. Individuals who refuse can be charged with trespassing under the Trespass to Premises Act. There is a $2,000 fine for a first offence.

Legislation and Bylaws

"Formal regulation and enforcement of relevant liquor-licensing laws motivate bar and club owners to adopt and enforce responsible serving practices and policies" (Scott, 2001, p. 28).

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Roundtable participants reported several examples where municipal legislation and bylaws have proven successful in preventing violence in and around licensed premises:

- In 2004, the City of Red Deer introduced its Drinking Establishment Bylaw No. 3332/2004 to address the "significant increase in problems associated with the use of Drinking Establishments by patrons, including disorderly conduct, violent altercations in the street, breaches of traffic and parking regulations, vandalism, littering, noise, and other disturbances of the peace." The bylaw outlines licensing requirements and spells out the licensing conditions that may be imposed on establishments "where events have occurred…that put at risk the safety, health, welfare or property" of the public or of the establishment's patrons or staff. The conditions include:
  - *requirements to maintain a prescribed number of trained security personnel*
  - *requirements to install and maintain video surveillance*
  - *requirements to install and maintain an airport-style metal-detecting security gate*
- Red Deer's Public Order Bylaw No. 3326/2004 addresses noise, nuisance, unsightly premises and graffiti related to drinking establishments and other businesses. Participants noted that the graffiti issue relates to perception: "If patrons see that a bar tolerates graffiti, they feel they don't have to respect the property."

Municipal bylaws such as those adopted in Red Deer make it possible to address violence-related issues more quickly than they could be addressed under Criminal Code prosecutions. Participants noted that bylaws allow police to issue on-the-spot tickets and fines. This serves as a deterrent and an effective enforcement tool. It reduces the amount of paperwork required of the police and lessens the strain on the judicial system.

Bylaw strategies can also reduce the concentration of bars and nightclubs in specific communities. One participant reported that Vancouver has imposed a moratorium on liquor licensing on Granville Street, in it's local entertainment district. Although this has created a secondary, resale market for licences, it has also improved the quality of liquor-licensed operations. Because a significant start-up investment is required, only "better quality operators" are likely to enter the field.

Participants reported a number of challenges related to introducing new bylaws and legislation. The issue of cost must be considered, and it takes time to nurture buy-in, overcome skepticism and build acceptance. In addition, more laws and more charges lead to more trials and more court time, which increases costs to the judicial system.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

While some participant groups advocated regulatory approaches for addressing the issue of violence, others noted that licensing and regulation are not the only options for controlling licensed establishments. Voluntary codes of conduct can also encourage "good quality operators" and good management of licensed premises. As one participant said, "We need to find a way to deal with violence without a bigger stick and without more regulation. It's already a highly regulated industry." Participants agreed that further exploration of the issues is required.

Roundtable participants proposed a number of new regulatory requirements related to the external environment within which licensed premises operate. Some suggested that liquor licensing regulation, municipal bylaws and related legislation (such as the Municipal Government Act) should mandate **pre-licensing planning and development approvals** as a condition of licensing. Some participant groups suggested that a business plan, a security plan and a noise management plan for the establishment should be conditions for licensing. They recommended that the security plan should include provisions for staff training and for video surveillance.

One participant group suggested that liquor licence approvals should require a **community impact study** and consider municipal statistics with regard to transportation, zoning and safety plans. This information would help police services allocate staff to appropriate areas, increase security where it's needed and provide more oversight in problem areas.

Some participant groups believed that **liability insurance** should be a requirement for licensing. The requirement for insurance would provide protection for patrons. Since good operators running low-risk establishments are rewarded with lower premiums, it would also encourage licensees to adopt responsible operating procedures and provide training for their staff.

Some participants proposed **redefining licensing classifications** to differentiate between types of establishments, and developing tiered regulations appropriate for each class. For example, a 1,000-seat establishment might need different regulations than a small neighbourhood pub. A nightclub might be required to participate in a linked security network, while other methods might be better suited to family-oriented licensed establishments.

One participant group proposed **increasing the legal drinking age.** Group members felt that maturity and responsible behaviour are a function of age. They believed their proposal merited further exploration in spite of the implementation-related challenges such a change would involve. They also recognized that raising the legal drinking age might simply displace the problem of violence: underage drinkers might do their drinking at bush parties instead of bars.

> "Why *are* bars located near seniors' homes?"
> –A roundtable participant

Participants recognized a need for **better coordination between municipalities** (which manage zoning and approve business licences) **and the AGLC** (which approves and issues liquor licences), **and between municipalities and licensees.** Better cooperation can help create safe, vibrant communities with an appropriate balance of licensed premises and other businesses. It can ensure that licensed premises are established in suitable neighbourhoods and prevent the overconcentration of bars and nightclubs.

Some participants proposed introducing municipal or provincial legislation to **restrict the size of licensed premises** and to **reduce bar clusters.** While these participants believed that communities with a high concentration of bars have higher crime rates, others felt that this is not always the case. As one participant noted, "Vancouver's Granville Avenue, Edmonton's Whyte Avenue and Calgary's Electric Avenue have a reputation as problem spots, yet Montreal's Boulevard St. Laurent–which is full of bars, restaurants and art galleries–does not."

Transportation-Related Strategies

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Participants reported that some of the violence around licensed premises stems from a lack of transportation options-particularly at closing time, when the demand for cabs and buses can easily exceed the supply. During the Christmas season, programs such as **Operation Red Nose**–a free, drive-home service–help to alleviate transportation shortages and prevent drinking and driving. Keys Please and Drive4U are year-round, paid, drive-home services. Some establishments in Red Deer and Grande Prairie address transportation issues year-round by providing patrons with free shuttle bus service home.

Programs such as #TAXI* also prevent violence related to drinking and driving. By dialing #TAXI (#8294) on any cellphone, callers are instantly connected to the first local cab company that can take them home. A challenge to such programs' success is that there may be too few cabs in service when they are needed.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Several participant groups proposed that violence could be reduced if **better transportation and more cabs** were available at bar closing times. Some participants proposed that cab companies should be required to provide taxi service to licensed premises. Some acknowledged the need for service, but questioned whether enough cabs were available even if service was mandated. Some noted that municipal intervention and changes to zoning bylaws might be required to address the transportation issue.

*#TAXI is sponsored by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission in partnership with the Canadian Association of Liquor Jurisdictions and the province's Mothers Against Drunk Driving group.

Enforcement

Establishing and enforcing clear rules of conduct for bar patrons reduces the potential for conflicts...and promotes a calmer atmosphere (Scott, 2001, p. 31).

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Roundtable participants noted that the visible presence of authority is effective in preventing violence and encouraging patrons to play by the rules. They identified a number of enforcement strategies that are currently in place in Alberta's licensed establishments:

- bar staff walk-throughs to identify potential problems
  - *Well-trained staff can spot and defuse trouble before it escalates.*
- AGLC's "Under 25" policy, which makes it mandatory for licensed establishments to request proof of age when a customer appears to be under the age of 25
- police walk-throughs and police presence at entrances to bars and clubs and in neighbouring communities
- off-duty police officers or private, uniformed security officers to assist in-house security staff
  - *One participant group noted that establishing good communication is key: "It's not good enough to have a uniformed officer present; that officer has to let the bar owner know about potential problems."*
- plainclothes police officers and AGLC inspectors conducting undercover operations
- cooperative enforcement through community-based efforts such as Safe City Nights (See p.28 for details about similar programs.)
- controlling overcrowding
  - *Inter-agency cooperation and regular inspections by the police, occupational health and safety officers, the fire department, and municipal bylaw enforcement staff help ensure that licensees adhere to legislation and that occupancy load limits are not exceeded.*

- random, unannounced inspections by AGLC staff

  - *Inspections can ensure that licensees are operating safe, viable businesses and complying with relevant policy and laws.*

- fines, sanctions and disciplinary action by the AGLC and other regulators
- prosecution of offenders

  - *This reinforces the message that staff and patrons are accountable for their actions. The challenge is ensuring that the punishment fits the crime. In addition, since prosecution is reactive, participants questioned if it was an effective way of preventing violence. "Does it make a difference?"*

- teamwork and cooperative relationships between licensees, the AGLC and the police, the fire department, occupational health and safety officers and municipal authorities

"Enforcement plays a big role in helping people feel safe in their communities. But we can't forget the other parts of the 'feeling safe' equation: public awareness, staff training and solid legislation."

–Harvey Cenaiko, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, March 31, 2006

One challenge of enforcement–whether in-house or via agencies such as the police and the AGLC–is the associated cost. Increasing police presence in and around licensed premises increases police budgets and workloads. Funding constraints can mean that police (and AGLC inspectors) must focus their efforts and target facilities *known* to have a high level of violence.

Another challenge is that a visible enforcement presence can alienate potential patrons by creating a sense that something is wrong. If patrons question management policies and procedures or react negatively to the presence of police, this can lead to aggression and violence. An appropriate balance between enforcement and education must be found.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

The enforcement strategies proposed by roundtable participants include proactive as well as reactive approaches. The former deal with preventive measures such as increasing police presence. The latter deal with fines or sanctions imposed after the fact.

Several groups of participants noted that **increasing the presence of police, AGLC inspectors and bylaw officers** can serve as a deterrent and contribute to enforcement. They recognized a need to **increase funding for police services.** This would allow the police to devote more resources to fighting organized crime at the community level, which in turn would increase safety in bars. More funding could support more undercover operations and allow the police to direct appropriate resources to violence-prone "hot spots" when needed.

Specific suggestions for proactive enforcement include:

- hiring 500 new officers for deployment on
  - *a province-wide government initiative to fight organized crime, gangs and the drug trade*
  - *community-based violence prevention in and around licensed premises*
- increasing municipal policing around bars and clubs: "The more uniforms there are on the street, the less violence."
- establishing mobile command posts near potential trouble spots
- inspections and audits by regulatory agencies or multidisciplinary task forces whose members might include the police, the AGLC, municipal bylaw enforcement officers, the fire department, and occupational health and safety inspectors
  - *One group suggested that if problems were identified, a safety audit or CPTED risk assessment should be required as follow-up.*

Participants recognized a need for **better cooperation** across jurisdictional boundaries. Some groups proposed that the AGLC, the police and the staff of licensed establishments should share responsibility for enforcement both inside and outside of licensed premises. Some noted that, with regard to liability issues, licensees' "duty of care" might extend beyond their premises; others cautioned that current insurance coverage restrictions prevent bar staff from involvement in incidents beyond the doors of their establishments.

> "Extending the 'duty of service' outside has serious implications. We don't want our employees out in the parking lot. If there was a criminal act, they would be responsible."
>
> –A roundtable participant

Participants proposed **better communication** between law enforcement agencies and the business community. They also noted that, in conjunction with proactive enforcement, **fines and sanctions** after the fact can help to deter violence. The strategies they proposed included:

- imposing stricter penalties for fighting in licensed premises
- defining minimum sentences
- implementing a system of escalating fines for repeat offenders
- imposing provincial penalties both on patrons who are involved in violent incidents and on the licensed premises where the incidents occur

Participants recognized that cooperation and buy-in from the justice system would be required to implement these measures, and that there might be a reluctance to "burden communities with fines." They also recognized that increased enforcement could tie up courts and prosecutors and increase justice system costs.

Public Awareness and Education

"We need to create a new culture and raise public awareness about the dangers of overconsumption."

"There needs to be a balance between education and enforcement. Both patrons and staff need to understand the consequences."

"Until government recognizes the negative effects of drinking, like they did with smoking, they're wearing two hats and nothing will change: one hat is much more lucrative than the other."

–A sampling of comments from roundtable participants

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Participants identified a number of public information and awareness campaigns that are effective in deterring violence:

- AADAC programs such as **Leaps and Bounds** (for Grades 4 to 6) help children make sound decisions regarding drug and alcohol use and gambling.

- **D.A.R.E.** (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a school-based program designed to teach children about the consequences of drug abuse and provide them with skills for resisting peer pressure to experiment with drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

- **Mothers Against Drunk Driving** (MADD Canada) is a non-profit, grassroots organization committed to stopping impaired driving–a form of violence that sometimes originates in licensed premises.

The effectiveness of education programs is sometimes difficult to measure. Challenges in implementing such programs include a shortage of resources, including time, funding and staff. As one participant put it, "teachers don't have time to deliver extra curriculum."

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Roundtable participants proposed the establishment of **social responsibility programs** for the staff of licensed establishments and for young people. ("You have to take a course to drive a car. Why not a course when you're old enough to drink?") They proposed education and awareness programs to help patrons understand their own role in preventing violence and to explain why bar security is necessary. Some suggested that public education programs should focus on **individual responsibility** and on "how not to become a victim" of violence.

Participants recommended the establishment of **programs to identify children at risk of violent behaviour**, and the provision of support and treatment for such children and their families. They suggested that professional resources should be dedicated to **education and intervention programs in elementary** schools. They cited a need for simple, standardized, easy-to-deliver provincial curriculum material to:

- help build children's self-esteem
- provide children with skills to avoid negative peer pressure
- teach children the consequences of involvement with gangs or drugs

They also noted the need for **"responsible alcohol consumption" education** for high school and post-secondary students.

> "Most violence in Canada is domestic–between people who know each other, in private settings. But if there's a gang shooting, and the media get hold of the story, they create the perception that gangs are the #1 cause."
>
> –A roundtable participant

Participants identified the need for **public awareness programs** to educate people about the dangers of alcohol overconsumption and about consequences such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. They recognized the positive role the **media** could play in generating public awareness about alcohol abuse and issues such as alcohol-related violence. However, they expressed frustration about what they perceived as the media's tendency to sensationalize issues.

Roundtable participants suggested that all policing organizations "need to be on the same page" when they are addressing the media. They acknowledged that, when violent incidents occur, the media need the facts. They recognized a need to release better information earlier, but cautioned that the premature release of official information could subvert ongoing investigations.

Managing the Licensed Establishment

Roundtable participants identified a variety of management-related strategies that can help prevent violence in and around licensed premises. These strategies relate to the following characteristics of licensed premises:

- the physical environment
- the social environment
- operating policies and procedures, including
    - *admission practices*
    - *pricing and serving practices*
    - *security*
- staffing issues

The Physical Environment

Participants recognized that both the physical and social environments that characterize licensed premises can contribute to aggression and violence.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Physical environment–related strategies reported by participants include:

- improving the lighting inside and outside licensed premises and in adjoining parking areas
- arranging furniture layouts and traffic flow patterns to eliminate congestion and open up sightlines (Participants acknowledged that the structure of a facility can sometimes pose challenges.)
- eliminating the use of glass beverage containers that can be used as weapons
    - *A "no glass" policy was recently implemented by some licensed establishments, but the results are not yet known.*

Some participants had successfully applied **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** principles in their establishments. The CPTED program, which includes several levels of training, uses environmental design assessments to identify and eliminate problem spots such as poorly lit areas, traffic flow bottlenecks, hidden areas that can screen illegal activity, or places where loitering can be a problem. It deals with the premises as a whole–including parking lots and exterior spaces.

The International CPTED (pronounced SEP-ted) Association was launched in 1996 and includes 700 members in 40 countries. The association holds that "proper design and effective use of the physical environment" can reduce the incidence and fear of crime, create safer environments and improve quality of life.

Participants who had experience with CPTED commended the program as "another set of eyes to help you scope potential problems." One strength is that "it lets you look outside the box." In one community, for example, a beam-style metal barricade across a road had became a place for bar patrons to sit–and trouble to brew. After a CPTED review, the problem was solved by replacing the beam with posts.

One challenge with regard to CPTED is determining who should conduct the required environmental assessments. The police, the AGLC, the Workers Compensation Board, bylaw officers, occupational health and safety inspectors and insurance companies were proposed as possible options.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Several participants groups recommended the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) approach as an effective way of creating a safer, crime-free physical environment in bars and nightclubs. They also expressed support for the "no glass beverage containers" policy recently introduced in some licensed establishments.

Participants proposed other strategies related to the physical environment:

- Post "refusal of service signage" so that patrons and the public are clear about the rules.
- Provide televisions in the washrooms.
    - *Participants noted that when patrons are entertained (with ads or sports highlights, for example), they are less likely to be aggressive or violent.*

The Social Environment

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Social environment–related strategies reported by participants include adopting a **zero-tolerance approach** to violence and inappropriate behaviour. Participants noted that this approach creates a positive social environment and eliminates problems before they start: patrons know they will be ejected from the premises at the first sign of trouble. The policy in some establishments is that any patron who harasses a police officer is immediately ejected. Participants noted that staff cooperation is critical for implementing such policies. Some also cautioned that while ejecting patrons may prevent the escalation of violence inside licensed premises, it may create violent situations outside.

Other current strategies reported by participants include:

- establishing a dress code for staff
  - *This conveys a positive image and makes staff identifiable.*
- providing uniforms for security staff so that they are easily recognizable
- establishing a dress code for patrons
  - *This allows licensees to be selective about the clientele they allow into their establishments.*
- prohibiting gang colours
  - *This keeps gangs out. However, overcoming gang intimidation of door and security staff can be a challenge.*
- eliminating graffiti
  - *"If patrons see that a bar tolerates graffiti, they feel they don't have to respect the property."*
- "toning down the music," especially near closing time
  - *As one participant said, "Classical music doesn't promote loitering."*

Participants noted that getting licensees and staff to buy in and support measures like the ones listed here can sometimes be a challenge.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Roundtable participants recommended creating a positive social environment by creating zero tolerance for violence. They endorsed the strategies currently in use and offered several new suggestions:

- know your employees and your customers
- choose music that creates an appropriate mood
- tone down the music and turn up the lights during the hour before closing time to signal patrons that they should be preparing to leave

Operating Policy and Procedures

ADMISSION PRACTICES

"You can pick and choose your customers. If you've had an issue with a patron, or if think you'll have an issue, don't let them in."

–A roundtable participant

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Many licensees have admission policies aimed at stopping trouble at the door. Roundtable participants identified the following admission practices:

- identification checks to ensure that underage patrons are not being admitted with fake IDs
  - *Some establishments use black light to ensure that patron IDs are genuine and have not been altered. Simple visual checks can also be effective if staff know what to look for. (The Alberta Server Intervention Program equips staff with the training they need to spot fake IDs.)*
- identification scanning using computer-based security systems such as BarLink or Secure Club.
  - *Patron identification is scanned into the security system; which cross-checks the information against a database of known offenders. Individuals included in the database (because of gang affiliation or a history of rowdy behaviour) are not admitted. Security system data is shared among system subscribers, so that a patron banned from one establishment cannot gain admittance at other establishments where the system is used.*
- cover charges
  - *This may reduce bar-hopping and binge drinking. As one participant noted, "If you pay $20 for admission, you're less likely to leave and go elsewhere."*

- mandatory coat checks
    - *This makes it harder for patrons to bring in weapons, drugs and illicit alcohol.*
- metal detectors (wands or security gates) and pat downs

Participants faced a number of challenges in implementing these admission practices. Most importantly, the efficient screening of patrons requires sufficient staffnumbers to prevent lineups, congestion and the violence that can result. Extra personnel are needed to staff coat checks. Conflict can arise if patrons don't want to check their coats, and insurance costs can go up if coats are lost.

Staff need training to recognize fake IDs. They also need training on how to conduct appropriate security checks. (For example, security staff need training in the proper use of metal detectors.) In addition, there are privacy issues related to searching people, and inappropriate searches can result in charges of sexual harassment.

Implementing computer-based identification scanning technology can be costly, and unless all licensed premises use the technology, problem patrons who are barred from one establishment can simply move on to bars that are not linked to the system. Without supplementary visual checks by staff, scanning technology is not effective in identifying patrons using borrowed ID. In addition, collecting patrons' personal information poses challenges with regard to privacy rights. It raises issues related to the legitimate use and protection of personal information.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Roundtable participants supported the use of wands or metal detectors. They also supported the use of identification scanning technology, particularly in large nightclubs and bars. However, they recognized the need for regulation to define the rules about the acceptable use of scanning technology. They suggested that research is needed to determine if such technology should be mandatory for all licensed premises, or if its usefulness depends on the size of the establishment.

One participant group proposed offering incentives to licensed establishments to encourage the use of security cameras, laser counters and other surveillance technology. Incentives could take the form of price discounts, rebates or lower insurance rates.

One participant group proposed restricting admission to licensed premises after a certain time (for example, not admitting patrons after midnight).

PRICING AND SERVICE PRACTICES

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Responsible beverage service practices can reduce excessive drinking and intoxication, which in turn reduce the potential for violence–both on the premises and on the street, after closing time. Roundtable participants reported using the following pricing and service practices:

- eliminating the use of glassware and glass beverage containers
  - *Eliminating glassware eliminates dishwashing and breakage costs, and removes materials that could be used as weapons.*
- limiting or prohibiting drink specials
- limiting the duration of happy hours
- limiting hours of service
- monitoring patrons' liquor consumption and refusing service to patrons who are intoxicated
  - *Licensees have the right and the responsibility to refuse service.*
- promoting food service
- providing entertainment
  - *Patrons drink less when other activities are available.*

Participants noted that pricing and service strategies can be extremely effective in preventing alcohol overconsumption and violence. A significant drawback is that adoption is voluntary. The result is that responsible licensees can lose business and clientele to establishments where drinks are deeply discounted and patrons are encouraged "to party till the very end." Another concern regarding establishments that practice deep discounting is that they upset the market structure: they enter the industry, undercut prices and then go broke.

> "A popular south-side nightclub sells its Thursday night happy hour cocktails for 25 cents a glass. If each cocktail has one ounce of liquor, how long will it take before a 118-pound, 18-year-old girl is throwing up in the bathroom? Or before two 230-pound boys are fighting in the parking lot?"
>
> –Paula Simon, "Cheap alcohol fuels cheap behaviour," *The Edmonton Journal*, March 21, 2006.

Participants cautioned that while pricing and service policies can provide a control mechanism, violence can escalate if patrons challenge management authority. Effective staffing and management practices must be in place to support house policies, and staffing costs can increase as a result. Participants also noted that "no glass" policies can increase staff costs because pouring drinks takes more time than service in bottles.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Many roundtable participants expressed support for the "no glass beverage containers" policy recently introduced in some licensed establishments. Many expressed support for current strategies such as limiting drink specials and happy hours, although they recognized that such measures might not be enforceable without legislation. Some participant groups called for legislation to establish minimum drink prices.

Roundtable participants proposed the following new approaches:

- Provide in-house breath sampling so that patrons can assess their level of sobriety.
- Promote food service.

- Limit the number of drinks patrons can order at last call.
- Stagger closing times to avoid a mass exodus of patrons onto the street. To make things fair for all licensees, consider a system of rotating closing times, where different establishments close earlier on different nights.
    - *One participant group suggested investigating the feasibility of later closing times (as in Vancouver bars) or even no closing times. (Places like New Orleans have 24-hour liquor service.)*
- Ban street food vendors from the vicinity of licensed premises.
    - *Eliminating street vendors reduces congestion. Less congestion on the streets means less potential for violence.*
- Provide a longer transition period between last call and the time when patrons must leave.
    - *For example, end liquor service at 2:00 a.m., end liquor consumption at 3:00 a.m., but allow patrons to stay and "wind down" until 4:00 a.m. This can prevent excessive consumption and the hoarding of drinks. Turning up the lights, softening the music and starting to clean the tables help to "get people moving out of the room."*
- Allow bars to remain open without liquor service.

SECURITY

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Roundtable participants recognized that appropriate security practices can prevent the outbreak of violence, limit repercussions when incidents do occur and protect the safety of patrons and staff. They noted that security practices are an important component of admission policy and practices. (A list of admission practices is included on p.42–43.)

Some licensees have developed **in-house security plans** for their establishments and conduct regular **safety audits** to identify potential problem spots and assess risks. Some have hired **washroom attendants** to discourage aggressive behaviour, prevent vandalism and stop the

consumption or sale of drugs in washrooms. Some equip their washroom attendants and door staff with two-way radios so they can call for assistance when they need it. Two-way radios allow staff to maintain contact with the police as well as with their colleagues.

Some roundtable participants reported using **surveillance technology** (including surveillance cameras, facial recognition programs, closed circuit TV, video systems and staff videographers) inside and outside their premises. They noted that "knowing someone is watching" can inhibit aggressive behaviour and "provide patrons with a heightened sense of accountability for their actions." Surveillance technology also provides an accurate record of events that can be used to identify assailants and help police with enforcement. Challenges include the cost of implementing and maintaining the technology, lighting constraints that can affect the quality of the recordings and privacy issues.

Roundtable participants noted the importance of maintaining an **appropriate ratio of security staff to patrons.** Some suggested there should be at least one security staff person for every 75 patrons; others suggested a ratio of 1:50.

Some participants reported that they provide their staff with monetary **incentives** for breaking up disturbances or keeping minors out of licensed establishments. Some hold regular pre- or post-shift staff debriefing sessions to share ideas and information about how to handle particular situations and prevent future incidents.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Roundtable participants expressed their support for the security strategies that are now in use. With regard to developing safety plans, one participant group proposed using the Southwest Airlines model, which includes risk assessment and the development of specific plans to mitigate identified risks. With regard to the use of closed circuit TV and video surveillance technology, some groups noted that this might be particularly appropriate in "hot spots" where there is a high concentration of bars and clubs. One participant group reported incidents of door staff trafficking drugs, and proposed mandatory surveillance of some kinds of bar staff to deter illegal activities.

While participants recognized that surveillance is an effective prevention strategy that can constrain aggressive behaviour, they also noted that there are many ways to achieve this goal. High-tech solutions may not be the best option for small mom-and-pop operations, although the potential for violence exists everywhere. Other options include encouraging regular police walk-throughs, and AGLC enforcement. Some participants suggested hiring uniformed, off-duty police officers to do surveillance work in licensed premises during peak hours, or even to patrol a number of premises in a particular area.

Some participants recommended employing female bouncers as well as males: "guys are often reluctant to pat down females." Some suggested that bar staff should be encouraged to "call 911" and involve the police as soon as violence erupts.

Staffing Issues

"One area where there is possibility for prevention of violence is hiring, screening and training of door staff."

–Roundtable keynote speaker Dr. Kathryn Graham

RECRUITMENT

Roundtable participants agreed that it was a bad idea to hire staff with criminal records–particularly records for drug-related offences or aggravated assault. They proposed mandatory criminal record checks as part of the recruitment process. Some participants believed provincial regulation would be needed to enforce this requirement.

A number of challenges were identified:

- It currently takes three weeks to complete a criminal record check, and up to a year before information on criminal convictions is added to the Canadian Police Information Centre database.
- Mandatory screening might be perceived as excessive government intervention.
    - *There is a cost.*

- *One participant group suggested that job applicants be asked to pay the $30 criminal record check fee up front, and that the employer reimburse the fee after three months. The fee itself would then serve as a screening tool, since applicants who refuse to pay probably have something to hide.*

TRAINING

"Trained door staff are crucial for preventing violence in licensed establishments."

–A roundtable participant

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Roundtable participants recognized that trained staff can play a key role in identifying and handling aggression before it escalates into violence. They noted the importance of ensuring that staff are familiar with the licensed establishment's violence-prevention policies and procedures. They also noted that properly implemented training programs can reduce licensees' risk of liability and help to lower insurance costs. One downside of training programs is the cost. Maintaining continuity of training is also a challenge in light of high staff-turnover rates.

The liquor industry has offered training programs for its staff for many years. The **Alberta Server Intervention Program (ASIP)** launched in November 2004 complements and expands existing programs. Administered by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission since the fall of 2005, ASIP is a mandatory, province-wide certification program for liquor industry staff. By training servers about the responsible sale and service of alcohol, the program aims to:

Safer Bars

Roundtable keynote speaker Kathryn Graham developed Ontario's Safer Bars training program, which has proven effective in preventing and defusing violence. Safer Bars was developed in consultation with bar owners and staff, police, lawyers, health professionals, civic leaders and liquor regulators. The program includes role-playing and group discussions in a three-hour session that covers the following topics:

- understanding how aggression esclates
- assessing the situation
- keeping cool
- understanding and using effective body language (nonverbal techniques)
- responding to problems
- legal issues and responsibilities

- reduce the risk of violence in licensed premises
- curb the problem of underage drinking
- reduce overconsumption
- prevent impaired driving

ASIP training is available in a variety of formats–as in-house staff training (through workshops and manuals), as a self-study print manual and video, or as online seminars. Training topics include legal responsibilities and liabilities, identifying intoxication, recognizing fake ID, handling situations involving minors and refusing service.

Roundtable participants said that one strength of programs such as ASIP is that staff across the province receive a standard level of training. They also noted the importance of using qualified instructors, assembling "the right teaching team" and customizing the training for specific staff roles.

PROPOSED NEW APPROACHES

Roundtable participants commended the ASIP and proposed the development of complementary, certificated **training programs for security staff and door staff.** Some groups suggested that the training should be developed and delivered by the AGLC; some suggested that programs from the Alberta Solicitor General College could be used.

Participants proposed that liquor industry training should cover the following topic areas:

- how to identify and defuse situations that could turn violent
- conflict resolution techniques, including passive resistance and training on how to break up fights
- crowd control
- teamwork in dealing with violent incidents
- cross-cultural awareness

- environmental design principles
- effective communication
- risk management
- how to conduct a safety audit
- how to identify a drug addict
- how to recognize criminal gang activity
- legal issues related to violence

One group proposed that licensees should work together to create an inventory of training approaches.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Most roundtable participants agreed on the need for regulatory control for security staff. Some groups proposed passing provincial legislation that would **regulate security staff** according to the same standards as other security industry employees. They felt the legislation should mandate

- standardized training
- testing and certification
- police background checks
- a minimum age requirement of 25

Participants recognized that eliciting licensees' support for the proposed legislation posed a challenge. Low wages and high staff turnover are also a concern: security staff typically earn between $8 and $10 an hour, which makes it hard to attract and retain good people.

Some roundtable participants proposed developing a **code of conduct** for the staff of licensed establishments. One participant group proposed using **surveillance** as a tool to ensure appropriate staff conduct. Another suggested that using **"mystery shoppers"** can be effective. A Calgary licensee whose staff and clientele tend to be mature reported hiring university students as undercover patrons. The students' reports of how they were treated and their ratings of the service they received are shared with staff, and corrective action is discussed, as necessary.

Moving Forward

In Part Two of the roundtable, participants worked in small groups assigned to one of three priority areas: research and policy, community mobilization and best practices, and finding resources. These three topics are closely interrelated. For example, research often identifies best practices; best practice ultimately drives the development of policy and legislation; policy development reflects community values and needs. As a result, there was considerable common ground in the themes and priorities reported by the various groups. Several themes emerged.

1. Violence in and around licensed premises reflects violent behaviour and tolerance for **violence in society at large.**

2. Eliminating violence requires an integrated **partnership approach** that involves the whole community and includes patrons.

3. **Research** on the extent and impact of violence in relation to licensed premises–and on best practices for eliminating violence–is needed to support sound policy development and good decision-making.

4. Communication and education are needed to spread operational **best practices** to all licensed premises.

5. **Public awareness and education** about preventing alcohol-related violence is needed at all levels of society. The staff, managers and owners of licensed establishments also need specialized training and education.

Violence in Society

> **"Licensed premises have an impact outside their own physical buildings...Most of the action is in the parking lot, or on the street, or in the neighbouring apartment. We need to address the problem of violence within this broader physical environment."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

Violence in and around licensed premises is not an isolated phenomenon. What happens in bars reflects what's happening in the world at large. As a result, addressing the issue of violence in bars means addressing the broader context of violence in our society.

Violence in and around licensed premises is shaped by the same demographic, economic and socio-cultural forces that shape Albertan's daily lives. As one participant put it, "We can't remove the issue of violence from other things happening in Alberta. We have among the highest rates of suicide, domestic assault and traffic incidents. What happens in bars reflects the larger society… And the best programs to stop violence need to reflect the uniqueness of Alberta and be sensitive to the uniqueness of different municipal situations."

Violence shapes our society as well as being shaped by it. As discussed on p. 21, violence undermines public safety, destroys lives and relationships, victimizes innocent neighbours and bystanders, strains our health care and justice systems, and hurts our businesses and our communities. Its repercussions extend far beyond the barroom walls.

Roundtable participants recognized that violence affects all sectors of society, and that all sectors have a role to play in eliminating violence. They also emphasized that violence is caused by individuals, and that individuals must take responsibility for their actions. Liquor licensees and governments are responsible for sound legislation and good management, but they cannot be held accountable for the irresponsible behaviour of individual patrons. The courts must ensure that perpetrators of violence face appropriate consequences.

A look at the research

In the Canadian Addiction Survey (Adlaf et al., p. 76) released in 2005, adult Albertans reported the following consequences of alcohol use by others:

- 13.6% reported having been pushed or shoved. (The rate for Canada as a whole was 10.8%.)
- 5.4% reported reported having been hit or physically assaulted. (The rate for Canada as a whole was 3.2%.)

Community-Based Partnerships

"We all have to work together to solve this problem. We won't be able to do it individually."

–Gerry McLennan, Executive Director, Regulatory Division, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

"We need to open communication lines and involve everyone who is touched by violence. Funding is not the big issue. What we need is community involvement."

–A roundtable participant

"Cooperation and communication are key. Our regulatory people and city staff need to go in and talk to licensees-not at 11 or midnight or 1 a.m, but in the afternoon. We need to sit down and talk to these people. Find out how we can help them, and how they can help us. It has to be one-on-one, and it has to be ongoing."

–A roundtable participant

Eliminating violence requires an integrated partnership approach that involves the whole community and includes patrons. Liquor licensees, regulators (including the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission), legislators, police departments, the justice system, Alberta's privacy commissioner, researchers, agencies such as AADAC and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, industry associations such as the Beverage Container Management Board, health authorities, the insurance industry, schools and post-secondary institutions, neighbourhoods, communities, city hall, provincial and federal government representatives, elected officials, individual citizens and barroom patrons must all have a seat at the table and work together to address the issue. As one participant put it, "We need to look at more neighbourhood partnerships with the people who keep us in business."

Roundtable participants identified a range of partnership-based community mobilization strategies during Part One. (For details, see the report section beginning on p. 9.) In Part Two, they reiterated that effective partnerships must be based on cooperation, education and good communications. In the words of one participant, "We need to work together and develop understanding. The whole education component is critical. Because the second you can take the stigma away–so these guys are here to work with me, rather than to penalize me–you change the equation."

Another participant echoed this sentiment: "Our #1 priority must be to improve cooperation and communication among stakeholders. Any time you can share experiences–what you're doing right, what you're doing wrong–it makes for a better operation."

Several participants emphasized the importance of building relationships and coordinating a community response to prevent and respond to violence in and around licensed premises. They pointed to the community-based task force models in Grande Prairie, Calgary and other centres as successful examples of a partnership approach. (For details, see p. 28.) They acknowledged the challenge of finding common ground among stakeholders with competing interests, but felt strongly that "some dialogue was better than no dialogue at all." Throwing money at the problem is not enough.

Research

> **"How does the issue of licensed premises fit into the bigger picture…? There's a lot of guessing and a tremendous lack of data and information. We need research….We need to know what's going on, what the trends are, and what we need to do to make a difference."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

> **"What are we dealing with? It's too important to guess. We need to put money into research."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

> **"It's important that we have a baseline of empirical data on which to build…We need to know exactly what the problems are, and where they are. Now, we've got the horse before the cart."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

> **"We intuitively know what happens at the end of the evening. But we need to validate this…Before you start focusing resources, you need to have evidence."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

Roundtable participants acknowledged the need for better information and research about the causes, the extent and the impact of violence in Alberta, especially in relation to licensed premises. The lack of Alberta-based data and concrete, statistical information makes it difficult to make evidence-based decisions. Without solid research, policy makers and licensees are forced to be reactive, rather than proactive, and to address the issue of violence on the basis of anecdotal evidence.

Sound policy development and good decision-making depend on good research. Participants recommended conducting an environmental scan to collect baseline data on violence in and around licensed premises. They recommended a review of the legislative framework and cross-jurisdictional research to validate proposed best practices and identify other effective approaches. They also noted the importance of developing standard definitions for concepts related to the issue of violence.

Some research data already exists: it just needs to be extracted and analyzed. For example, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission keeps incident reports that document violations of the Gaming and Liquor Act. Additional information is accessible through sources such as AADAC, the Ontario-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Statistics Canada. Local police forces keep records, as do licensees themselves. However, while much of the available information is very detailed, as it is not always easy to retrieve, as it is often not standardized, nor is it comparable across jurisdictions.

Targeted studies are needed to compile data specific to Alberta and specific to licensed premises. Both qualitative and quantitative data are required, and care must be taken to ensure accuracy and minimize bias. Mapping technology makes it possible to plot violence "hot spots" and conduct tactical analyses: "If you can map where violence happens, you can develop targeted approaches to stop it."

Roundtable participants cautioned that any research that is undertaken must have practical applications that can help drive policy decisions. They also cautioned against generalizing research findings: generalizations are not always appropriate, since rural communities deal with different issues than urban ones, and different types of establishments deal with different types of concerns. On the other hand, participants noted that "generalizable data can be turned into action."

Environmental Scan

Roundtable participants recognized that violence in and around licensed premises fits into the bigger picture of violence in society. Within the context of licensed premises, several key questions must be addressed:

- What types of licensed premises are most prone to violence? Why?
- Who is involved? Is violence perpetrated by gangs? patrons? staff? Is any particular group seen as the source of the most serious violence?

- What are the factors that instigate or contribute to violence?
    - *Does drinking age affect the level of violence?*
    - *What is the effect of excessive drinking? overcrowding?*
    - *What is the interplay of factors such as drug use and the drug trade?*
    - *What role is played by factors such as the size of a venue, drink pricing, staff ratios, closing time, music and lighting? How are such operational factors "managed" in other parts of Canada and in other countries?*
    - *What is the effect of minimum drink prices? How have other jurisdictions approached this, and what was the effect? Do price restrictions work?*
    - *Is violence more prevalent in areas with a high concentration of bars?*
- What resources (financial and other) are needed to address the issue of violence in and around licensed premises?

Best Practices

In Part One of the roundtable, participants developed an inventory of best practices currently in use, and brainstormed suggested new approaches. (For details, see the chapter called "Taking Stock," which begins on p.23.) In Part One and Part Two, they proposed research to validate the effectiveness of these best practices. They noted that many bars–including some of the biggest ones–are managed very well. They proposed looking to other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world to uncover "lessons learned" with regard to the following key questions:

- What is known about best and worst practices–both in Alberta and in other jurisdictions? What works? What doesn't? Who should be responsible for what? What can licensees reasonably deal with? What areas should fall to municipalities? regulators? industry associations? other stakeholders?
- What types of best practices should be mandatory or legislated? When are voluntary measures more appropriate or more effective than legislated ones?
- What community-level programs and strategies have other jurisdictions and other countries used to address violence in and around licensed premises? Have these programs been effective? Are they sustainable? How were they monitored and evaluated?

- Are staggered closing times effective in reducing violence and protecting public safety? How have other jurisdictions addressed the issue of closing times? What transportation factors must be considered? What policy options should be considered? What options would best meet public expectations and community standards in the Alberta market?

- Eliminating glassware in licensed premises was proposed as a strategy for reducing violence. Is this approach indeed effective? What is the experience in other jurisdictions? What are the social, environmental and economic implications? Should a ban on glassware apply to all licensed premises or only certain ones? What criteria should be used to decide? Should glassware best practices be dictated by policy, or is voluntary adoption preferrable?

    - *Liquor manufacturers and agencies such as the Beverage Container Management Board might be a source of relevant data.*

- What is the role of technology (including scanning and surveillance technology) in preventing violence? What are the risks and benefits of using technology? When is the use of technology appropriate? What rules should be in place?

- Should liability insurance be mandatory?

- What is the effect of police presence in preventing or reducing violence?

- How can knowledge of best practices be shared across the industry?

- How should best practices be implemented and evaluated?

- What kind of training is needed within the liquor industry? What types of staff should be certified? What levels of certification are needed?

    - *The importance of well-trained door staff was a recurring theme at both parts of the roundtable. Participants proposed research to determine what types of door staff training are offered elsewhere in the world. Has the training been effective? What standards should apply and how should they be evaluated? Who should be responsible for training delivery? Participants suggested that local police services, security training institutions and the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security ministry might be appropriate choices.*

- In what areas is more public awareness and education needed? What organizations are effective in preventing violence and targeting offenders?

The Legislative Framework

Participants proposed a review of current legislation to determine the possibilities it offers and the limitations it imposes. For example, laws such as the Trespass to Premises Act give business owners a useful tool for keeping potentially violent patrons off their premises. (This act provides authority for the voluntary "No Gang Colours, No Gang Clothing" program recently launched in Grande Prairie. See p. 28 for details.) On the other hand, laws such as the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Information Protection Act may pose barriers to the use of surveillance technology, which is an effective means of excluding patrons with a history of violent behaviour. Participants recognized a need for licensees, police services and government regulators to work with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and find the appropriate balance between citizens' right to privacy and licensees' responsibility to provide liquor service in safe, violence-free establishments.

Best Practices

> **"We can't wait for the research. We know what to do, and we need to start now. We could act on ideas like safety audits and staff training without waiting for more research."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

> **"We need a two-pronged approach. There are things we can do now, but to make lasting improvements to public safety in the province, we need better data and more information."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

> **"The impact of best practices inside a bar leads to a reduction of violence outside."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

"Best practices" were a recurring theme in both parts of the roundtable. Many licensees already employ a best practices approach in managing their operations. However, communication and education are needed to spread current best practices across the industry.

In Part One of the roundtable, participants discussed best practices related to the management and operation of licensed premises. (For details, see the "Managing the Licensed Establishment" section that begins on p. 38.) The ideas they proposed related to the physical environment, the social environment, operating policies and procedures, and the hiring practices that characterize licensed premises. In Part Two of the roundtable, participants identified the need for additional research to establish the feasibility and effectiveness of a number of best practice approaches, including

- staggered closing times
- minimum drink prices
- bans on glassware
- mandatory liability insurance (Small establishments may need less coverage than large ones.)
- more rigorous licensing requirements (For details, see the following section.)
- an integrated licensing approach that links municipal, business and regulatory requirements
- more rigorous licensing standards linked to a recognition program like the five-star system used to rate hotels (For details, see the "Recognition Programs" section on p. 61.)

Some participants suggested that once best practices had been identified, government intervention might be required "to put the rules in place" and ensure a level playing field. Others believed that the liquor industry was already overregulated and that voluntary measures would be more effective than legislated ones. Further discussion is needed to explore the degree of regulation that is appropriate and the effectiveness of voluntary versus legislated standards. As participants observed, a move toward more government intervention would require a paradigm shift: the Alberta government's approach over the past decades has been to "get out of the business of doing business."

Minimum Licensing Standards and Requirements

Discussions were preliminary, and there was no consensus about what minimum licensing standards might look like or how they might best be implemented.

Some participants suggested that licence requirements should include environmental design assessments that comply with CPTED principles. (See p. 35 for details.) Some proposed minimum staff–patron ratios and mandatory training and criminal checks for staff of licensed establishments.

Some participants said that the issuance of liquor licences should be tied to community impact studies, municipal zoning and land use bylaws, and noise control requirements. Some believed that mandatory training for new operators should be a prerequisite for licensing: training would ensure that operators understood the relevant rules and regulations and were prepared to prevent and deal with violent situations on their premises. Some proposed re-evaluating the current liquor licence renewal process: perhaps licence renewals should not be automatic.

Roundtable participants did agree that a "one size fits all" approach to licensing standards is not appropriate: different communities and different types of drinking establishments have different clientele and different needs. Some participants suggested that additional licence classifications levels are needed to accommodate the specific needs of small versus large or urban versus rural establishments. Some believed that licensing requirements should be flexible enough that communities could set standards that met local needs.

Roundtable participants cautioned that changes to liquor licensing requirements must be manageable. They must not impose onerous financial and staffing costs on liquor licensees or on regulators.

Recognition Programs

Roundtable participants proposed the establishment of some type of "incentive program" to reward licensees who employ best practices. Suggestions included the development of an accreditation program (like the five-star hotel rating system) based on a list of objective standards for premises management. Such a program would have several benefits. Bar owners who met the highest standards would be better positioned to generate more revenue from patrons. The would also benefit from lower liability insurance premiums.

Education

Roundtable participants proposed that public awareness and education about preventing alcohol-related violence is needed at all levels of society–from schoolchildren and post-secondary students to the business community, law enforcers, liquor licensees and their staff, and the "ordinary citizens" who patronize licensed establishments. Several key areas were identified:

- training for door and security staff
- pre-licensing start-up training for new bar owners
    - *"How to open a bar" training could be developed and delivered by industry associations.. It could include a checklist of issues for new owners to consider before launching their businesses.*
- education about relevant legislation (the Trespass to Premises Act, for example) and how it can support liquor licensees
- public awareness, education and prevention programs
- high school and post-secondary programs to teach young people how to drink responsibly, "how to behave in bars" and "how not to become victims of violence"
- training to help legislators and regulators understand the industry and the issues faced by liquor licensees

Summing Up

The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises is a significant first step in addressing a serious issue. Participants were unanimous in their acknowledgement of the value of the event. They welcomed the opportunity to share their ideas and to hear the diversity of issues and views expressed by their associates and colleagues. Many expressed particular appreciation that, for the first time, liquor licensees and operators had been invited to the table to discuss violence in and around licensed premises.

Nearly three-quarters of participants (74%) rated Part 1 of the roundtable as "excellent" overall; 26% rated it as "good."

Participants were overwhelmingly positive about Part Two of the roundtable as well, rating their overall experience as excellent (46%) or good (54%).

The ideas and recommendations generated at the roundtable are an important starting point for addressing the issue of violence. Nonetheless, participants realized that there is still much work to be done. The root causes of violence are complex and interlinked. Addressing the problem and eliminating violence requires cooperation and commitment from all sectors–from legislators, law enforcers, regulators, municipalities, communities, liquor licensees, bar patrons and citizens.

The ideas and opinions shared at the roundtable provide a starting point for the work ahead.

Paying the Piper

> **"The big problem is resources... If it's reasonable to set a patron–security staff ratio for bar owners, there should also be a reasonable ratio for cops on the street. Regulatory agencies also have to take responsibility and not always use 'lack of resources' as an excuse."**
>
> –A roundtable participant

Roundtable participants recognized that dealing with the issue of violence has significant cost implications. They proposed several ideas for consideration. Implementing some of these ideas would require changes to licensing policy, legislation or municipal bylaws.

- Impose a seat tax on licensed premises and direct a portion of the revenue toward policing.

    - *Red Deer and High Level currently use this approach. Participants noted that such a tax is only fair if it is applied on a per-seat (not per-establishment) basis. They also cautioned that increasing taxes increases the expectation that more policing services will be provided.*

- Explore the feasibility of business taxation based on services required.

    - *At present, business property tax is levied at a standard rate, yet a licensed establishment is likely to need far more police services than a shoe store, for example.*

- Increase the funding municipalities receive for policing costs.

    - *Participants noted that liquor revenues flow to the province, yet it is municipalities that bear the cost of policing the liquor industry. A portion of the liquor mark-up collected by the province is allocated for municipal policing costs.*

- Use the lobbying power of industry associations to convince governments and politicians to allocate appropriate resources toward the prevention of violence.

- Approach the liquor industry for financial support to fund violence prevention.

Safe Bars, Safe Communities

Citizens have the right to feel safe in their homes and their communities, and keeping Albertans safe means dealing with the issue of violence.

Violence in and around licensed premises affects everyone–from liquor licensees and their staff and patrons, to neighbourhoods and communities, governments, victims of violence and their families, and every citizen. Violence affects us all.

Recently released highlights of a Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse study* note that, in 2002, the social cost of alcohol abuse in Alberta topped $1.6 billion.

*Rehm et al., *The costs of substance abuse in Canada 2002: Highlights*, pp. 9 – 10.

This represents 1.5% of Alberta's GDP (gross domestic product) and is the equivalent of $527 for each citizen of the province. Across Canada, alcohol accounted for $14.6 billion in social costs. Of this amount, $7.1 billion was for lost productivity due to illness and premature death. Direct health care costs accounted for $3.3 billion, and law enforcement for $3.1 billion. The numbers are staggering, and there is no question that alcohol abuse and alcohol-related violence require immediate, concerted, community-wide attention.

As Minister Graydon said in his roundtable opening remarks, "Collectively, we can and we will address this issue" of violence in and around licensed premises.

Next Steps

> **"We have great ideas on paper that clearly spell out the direction we need to take. Now it's up to us to lift those ideas off the paper and turn them into action...We have the opportunity to make change. Looking at policy and legislation–if it's weak, we need to change it."**
>
> –Harvey Cenaiko, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, March 31, 2006

> **"In government, as in business, there is a process to follow and many variables to consider. Not everything is the right thing to do, and not everything can be done now. Change has to be carefully considered, planned and managed."**
>
> –Gordon Graydon, Minister of Gaming, March 31, 2006

The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises has opened the doors to further discussion and cooperative action by citizens, businesses, communities and government. As an immediate next step, government staff will study the roundtable results and prepare a report with recommendations for review by the Minister of Gaming and the Alberta Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. This process may involve commissioning research and preparing position papers on critical areas.

The ministers' review of the report and recommendations prepared by staff will determine what action is taken. Next steps may include allocating funds for further research, drafting new legislation or appointing a task force to build consensus and propose standards. In the meantime, further discussions at the community level and continued cooperation among stakeholders will bring all Albertans closer to solving the problem of violence.

Roundtable Participants

Alberta Gaming and Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security appreciate the participation of the following organizations and businesses. Thank you for sharing your time, your expertise and your ideas. Together, we *can* deal with the problem of violence in and around licensed premises.

Government
Alberta Gaming
Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security
Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
Alberta Justice
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, British Columbia
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Alberta

Businesses and Community Associations
Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police
Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research
Alberta Charitable Casino Operators Association
Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association
Alberta Restaurant and Foodservices Association
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association
International CPTED Association
J. J. Ryder Investments
Old Strathcona Hospitality Association, Edmonton
Rovere Consultants International Inc.
Students' Association of MacEwan
University of Alberta
University of Alberta Students' Union

Municipalities
City of Calgary
City of Edmonton
City of Grande Prairie
City of Lethbridge
City of Red Deer

Law Enforcement
Calgary Police Service
Camrose Police Service
Edmonton Police Service
Lacombe Police Commission
Lacombe Police Service
Lethbridge Regional Police
Medicine Hat Police Service
RCMP, Fort McMurray
RCMP, Grande Prairie
RCMP, "K" Division
RCMP, Wetaskiwin

Owners and Operators
Branley's, Red Deer
Cecil Hotel, Calgary
Cook County Saloon, Edmonton
Corral, Grande Prairie
Cowboys, Calgary
Cowboys, Edmonton
Esmeralda's, Edmonton
Outlaws, Calgary
Ranchman's, Calgary
Red's, Edmonton
Regis Plaza Hotel, Calgary
Standard and Hudson's Tap House, Edmonton
The Attic, Edmonton
Town and Country Motor Hotel, Calgary
West Edmonton Mall

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